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# A unique contribution to lifelong learning in Turkey: Elginkan Foundation as a non-governmental organization

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## Abstract

The aim of the study is to determine contributions to lifelong learning in Turkey by Elginkan Foundation as a non-governmental organization. Case study method and descriptive analysis technique were used in the study. The results showed that, Elginkan Foundation provides various supports to education such as scholarship programs, project and innovative idea contests, research funding, building schools, supporting publication activities, setting vocational and technical education centers. In conclusion, many industrial organizations satisfy their qualified manpower by means of vocational courses, personal and professional development trainings offered by education centers of the foundation, and significant level of employment is created.

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**Keywords:** Non-governmental organization, lifelong learning, adult education, vocational education;

## 1. Introduction

Twenty first century is an age in which a rapid improvement takes place in the fields of science and technology and existing knowledge doubles in every four years (Drucker, 1996). The members' knowledge of present society in which the amount of the knowledge increases quickly becomes insufficient as a result of this rapid improvement (Polat & Odabaş, 2008). Due to these rapid developments, it is possible to state that to reach a better life standard, individuals who forms information society need to increase their knowledge levels and their qualifications continuously. People who desire to improve their qualifications need to perpetuate their personal and vocational development, no matter the occupational group they belong to or the level of education they have attained, and income level (Torres, 2004). Therefore, to reach the knowledge that they need and to use it in a productive way, today's people need a lifelong learning process to maintain their personal and vocational development (AASL/AECT, 1998).

Individuals' are in need of knowledge and the learning activities to update their skills and this need is named "lifelong learning" by Lengrad (1970). The term (lifelong learning) refers to the supporting process which helps to increase and strength the knowledge, values, skills and personal understanding gained in their whole life, and also allowing them to implement in real life (Candy, 2003; Diker, Coşkun, & Demirel, 2012). From this point of view, lifelong learning stands as a basic guiding tenet for educational system rather than being a part of it (Bağcı, 2011). Educational policies for an effective lifelong learning process consist of increases in pre-school attendance, continuous learning after compulsory education, extended and varied upper secondary education, shaping higher

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education depending on demands and strengthening adult education by modernizing (Uzunboyu & Hürsen, 2011). Even if the vocational training and employment are the leading purposes of lifelong learning, increasing of active citizenship, sustaining personal development and reinforcement of social participation also take an important place (Birzea, 2000).

Civil society establishments and non-profit organizations are leading forces which contribute social participation and strengthen democratic citizenship (Bedük, Usta, & Kocaoğlu, 2006). Knowledge and skills gained by individuals through lifelong learning activities are strengthening elements for participation to this kind of social structures by means of affecting their attitudes towards them (Antikainen, 2001). With the help of this knowledge, it is possible to state that the core of strengthening social life and lifelong learning is individuals' continuous learning activities. There is a need of various lifelong learning activities for individuals, who are expected to maintain their education in the name of a continuous development for maintaining the reciprocal relation between their social participation and civil society establishments and non-profit organizations (Bağcı, 2011). Investments, to fulfill the lifelong learning needs of adult people, have high costs; as it is the same in every field of education.

It is hard for the government to maintain all of this high cost needs of adult education. Within the realization of this fact, some civil society establishments, local administrations, industrial and non-profit organizations give various supports to education (Jowett & Dyer, 2012). Besides Public Education Centers running by the government, constructed schools, granted scholarships, provided search funds, and organized personal development and vocational training courses by educational volunteer associations and foundations, municipalities and industrial organizations (Toprak & Erdoğan, 2012). While some of these establishments can support only one or two applications and fees are charged from the participants of vocational courses, Elginkan Foundation undertakes all costs and gives every type of support to education. Due to this important reason, as a unique example of the support that is given by non-profit organizations to lifelong learning, Elginkan Foundation's applications of educational support, primarily to adult education, forms the core of the research.

## 2. Methodology

Determining the contribution Elginkan Foundation of applications in the educational field performed by as a unique formation and non-profit organization to lifelong learning in Turkey was aimed in this study. For this purpose, the study was carried out with the case study method; one of the qualitative researches patterns and defined by Yin (1984) as "empirical research method without the boundaries as certain lines between phenomenon and context, and descriptive analysis techniques were utilized.

For the study, data was compiled from Elginkan Foundation Articles includes changes in 2004, websites of Elginkan Foundation ([www.elginkanvakfi.org.tr](http://www.elginkanvakfi.org.tr)), vocational and technical training centers affiliated to Elginkan Foundation ([www.aemtem.org](http://www.aemtem.org); [www.boluelginkanvakfi.org.tr](http://www.boluelginkanvakfi.org.tr); [www.ueemtem.org.tr](http://www.ueemtem.org.tr)) and industrial organizations of Elginkan Group ([www.eca.com.tr](http://www.eca.com.tr); [www.elginkan.com.tr](http://www.elginkan.com.tr)).

The steps of descriptive analysis; the creation of a thematic framework, data processing, the identification of findings and interpretation of findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006), were followed during the analysis process of data. At the beginning of data analysis, the framework which including themes as administrative bodies of the foundation, industrial organizations and activities of vocational and technical training centers affiliated to the foundations, education institutions constructed, scholarships provided, activities supported and publishing studies funded by the foundation was created. Then, data was processed in accordance with this thematic framework and are presented in tables. Lastly, the findings were briefly described and the results were determined according to them.

## 3. Findings

The administrative body of Elginkan Foundation; a unique example for the long time existence of industry organizations community without depending on persons, is represented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Board of Trustees in Elginkan Foundation

Constant Members	Elected Members	Representatives of the Organizations
* Honorary President (Hüseyin Ekrem Elginkan)	* E.C.A. Die-cast Industry Joint Stock Co. Representative	* İTÜ Representative - Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration
* Board of Trustees Member (Prof. Dr. Halim Doğrusöz)	* Elginkan Holding Joint Stock Co. Representative	* İstanbul University Representative - General Secretary
* Board of Trustees Member (Av. S. Necla Baltacıoğlu)	* Elper Investment Joint Stock Co. Representative	* Boğaziçi University Representative - Faculty Member

Continue of Table 1. Board of Trustees in Elginkan Foundation

Constant Members	Elected Members	Representatives of the Organizations
* Chairman of the Board (Gaye Akçen)	* Elba Pressure Die Casting Industry Joint Stock Co. Representative	* ODTÜ Representative - Faculty Member
* Board of Trustees Member (İsmail Hakkı Balıkcı)	* Elsan Raw Materials Industry Joint Stock Co. Representative	* Ege University Representative - Vice Rector
* Board of Trustees Member (İsmet Sevil)	* Elsel Gas Armatures Joint Stock Co. Representative	* İş Bank Representative - Deputy General Manager
* Board of Trustees Member (Edip Haznedar)	* Valf Industry Joint Stock Co. Representative	* TSE Representative - Coordinator of the Marmara Region
* Board of Trustees' Chairman (M. Celal Şardan)	* Eke Construction Industry and Trade Joint Stock Co. Representative	* Manisa Municipality Representative - City Manager
* Board Member (Ahmet Şahin)		* MESS Representative - Collective Bargaining Law and Legal Counsel
* Board of Trustees Member (Av. M. Cengiz Kırııcı)		* MKE Institution Representative - Chief Inspector
* Board of Trustees Member (Doç. Dr. Rahmi Oruç Güvenç)		* TÜBİTAK Representative - Legal Counsel
* Board of Trustees Member (H. Tuncer Ürün)		* TSK Strengthening Foundation Representative

According to data in Table 1, Elginkan Foundation's Board of Trustees is composed of total 31 members (excluding deceased Hüseyin Ekrem Elginkan as Honorary President) from public institutions, industrial organizations, universities and other relevant factors.

Table 2. Structure of Board of Directors, Directorate and Supervisors in Elginkan Foundation

Board of Directors	Supervisors	Directorate
* Chairman	* XXX Joint Stock Co. Manager	* Manager
* Deputy chairman	* YYY Joint Stock Co. Manager	* Accounting Manager
* Member	* ZZZ Joint Stock Co. Manager	* Project Development and Planning Manager
* Member		* Head of Planning
* Member		* MANİSA Ümmehan Elginkan Voc. and Tec. Ed. Center Manager
* Member		* BOLU Elginkan Foundation Voc. and Tech. Ed. Center Manager
* Member		* İZMİT Ahmet Elginkan Voc. and Tech. Ed. Center Manager

**Note:** 5 members from Board of Directors are Board of Trustees' members at the same time. The industrial organizations which supervisors come from are not stable.

Elginkan Foundation-funded vocational and technical training centers are located in developed industrial zones of Turkey that is understood from the information contained by Table 2. Additionally, information related to schools; donated to the Ministry of National Education, built and scholarships provided by the Elginkan Foundation are in Table 3.

Table 3. Schools Built and Higher Education Scholarship Provided By Elginkan Foundation

Schools	Öğretim Kurumunun Kapasitesi ve Maliyetleri
Ümmehan Elginkan Foundation Kindergarten Building (2005)	80 Student Capacity; 122.652 € Cost
İTÜ Ekrem Elginkan High School (2005)	700 Student Capacity; 3.149.171 € Cost
Cahit Elginkan Anatolian High School (2005)	720 Student Capacity; 2.320.442 € Cost
E.C.A. Elginkan Anatolian High School (2008)	1.200 Student Capacity; 4.093.567 € Cost
E.C.A. Elginkan Primary School (2010)	1.152 Student Capacity; 2.488.263 € Cost
Undergraduate and Graduate Student Scholarships (2012-2013)	132 € per Month (During 12 Months)

**Note:** Exchange rate in foundation years of schools is used for converting TL to €.

According to data in Table 3, total capacity of schools built by Elginkan Foundation is 3.852 students and total cost is 12.174.095 €. Also, Elginkan Foundation supports various researches, project contests and publication activities, and Table 4 contains information about them and the amount of support.

Table 4. Researches, Project Contests and Publication Activities Supported by Elginkan Foundation

Research and Project Contests	Publication Activities
* Elginkan Foundation Turkish Culture Research and Technology Awards (Every year since 2006)	* Cataloging Turkish Handwritings in the Library of Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute
* ODTÜ New Ideas, New Studies (Every year since 2005)	* Donating Boğaziçi University Publishing Books to 300 High Schools
* Boğaziçi University New Dreams, Innovative Thoughts Student Project Contest (Every year since 2008)	* Editing "The Mind's I" named book by Boğaziçi University Publishing
* İTÜ Core Project Contest (in 2011)	* Printing "Bilimin Işığı" named book series by Boğaziçi University Publishing
* Ege University Original Solution Researches and Original Solution Ideas (in 2010)	* Printing "Cumhuriyet Dönemi, Türk Kültürü-Atatürk Dönemi (1920-1938)" named Book
* Ege University Original Solution Project Contest (in 2009)	* Translating Ottoman Handwriting Texts into Turkish using with Smart Database
* Ege University Graduate Industry Applicable Project Contest (in 2008)	

**Not:** Exchange rate in arranging years of contests is used for converting TL to €.

As a result of information in Table 4, some research and project contests about Turkish Culture, new technologies and innovative ideas are organized and also various scientific activities in Turkey's leading higher education institutions supported by Elginkan Foundation. Furthermore, some information on education activities in vocational and technical education centers affiliated to Elginkan Foundation is in Table 5.

Table 5. Vocational and Technical Education Centers of Elginkan Foundation and Offering Trainings

Vocational and Technical Education Centers	Offering Trainings	Number of Beneficiaries
MANİSA Ümmehan Elginkan Vocational and Technical Education Centers	Vocational Courses	4.061
	Development and Integration Courses	39.094
	Total Quality Management Seminars	130.695
BOLU Elginkan Foundation Vocational and Technical Education Centers	Vocational Courses	65
	Development and Integration Courses	17.164
	Total Quality Management Seminars	31.393
İZMİT Ahmet Elginkan Vocational and Technical Education Centers	Vocational Courses	---
	Development and Integration Courses	15.007
	Total Quality Management Seminars	29.994

**Note:** The numbers in the table consists of data which is until September 30, 2012.

267.473 people were benefited from training programs offered by Elginkan Foundation's vocational and technical education centers in three different categories according to data in Table 5.

#### 4. Conclusion and discussion

Elginkan Foundation; a unique non-profit organization, is directed by a board of trustees consisting of representatives of industrial organizations, local administrative facilities, universities and various non-governmental organizations. It can be said possibly that such an administrative structure formed by the union of various facilities

helps to develop interrelations between organizations operating in different fields and to increase the cooperation between social, educational and industrial organizations. Furthermore, schools at different education level were built and devolved to Turkish Ministry of National Education by Elginkan Foundation which is also responsible of directing Elginkan Industrial Community. Thereby, a portion of the revenue from organizations in Elginkan Industrial Community passes to country's formal educational system and that is utilized to support the education of students from different age groups. Moreover, the foundation supplies scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students and also supports various scientific publications, innovative projects and competitions designed by leading universities in Turkey. Elginkan Foundation helps transferring the outcomes of leading ideas and projects into the industrial production besides providing contribution to culture of the country by supporting these kinds of activities.

In addition to these, applications of adult education which is one of the most important purposes for Elginkan Foundation takes place in vocational and technical education centers directed by the foundation. The foundation offers totally free lifelong learning opportunities through individual development seminars, development and integration courses and vocational courses in these education centers by using a considerable amount of its incomes. These trainings help individuals to reach the information which they need for their personal and vocational necessities or refresh the knowledge that they already have (Walters, 2006; Torres, 2004). Besides increasing the intellectual knowledge levels of individuals, it is also possible to consider that they supply help to others working in the same organization by sharing the information; gained from trainings, to create a better ground for organizational learning (Birzea, 2000; Jongbloed, 2002). Additionally, a particular amount of individuals are getting employed and already employed ones turn into more qualified work power thanks to vocational training and vocational development courses (Lans et al. 2004). While the vocational qualities; gained from these courses, of individuals can possibly find a chance to increase their incomes which end up with a better life standard, the employment provided by various enterprises supply an important contribution to the country's economy (Jowett & Dyer, 2012).

According to results of the research, suggestions for authorities and researchers to increase the contributions of non-governmental and non-profit organizations to lifelong learning are stated below.

- The administrative structures of non-governmental and non-profit organizations which serve educational opportunities can be formed in the way to help the representation of different parts of the society and related enterprises.
- Encouraging legal regulations should be made in order to supply contribution like building new schools, providing scholarships and supporting the publishing activities by industrial organizations, foundations or other enterprises to culture and education of the country.
- The relationship of universities and industrial world shall be much more effective by means of non-profit organizations' leadership on activities which transfer the outcomes of innovative ideas and projects into industrial production.
- Vocational high schools or education centers can be constructed to supply the needs of specific industrial fields by industrial communities and other related organizations or the cooperation might be provided with already existing vocational and technical education facilities.
- The process of Elginkan Foundation's administrative structure, similarities or differences between Elginkan Foundation and various organizations which provide support to education, personal and educational differences of individuals who attended to the trainings provided by Elginkan Foundation, their expectations from these educational activities and the fulfillment level of these expectations, and post-educational situations will be researched by using qualitative and quantitative methods.

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